

LETTERS FROM INDIA

1971 - 1974

1976 - 1980

by

Ann A. Anderson



Occasional Paper No. 26

Published by the

Lethbridge Historical Society

P.O.Box 974

Lethbridge, Alberta, Canada T1J 4A2

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Front Cover - Lakshmi and Ann as the sun sets over the Indian Ocean.

Rear Cover - Spectacular bougainvillea spilling over the garage at our home in Hyderabad.

This booklet was prepared entirely on the Lethbridge Historical Society computer.
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None goes his way alone;
All that we send into the lives of others comes back into our own.*
Edwin Markham

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The letters herein were written--from India--to my daughter, Leslie. I thank her for allowing me to use these reminiscences of my life in that far away country. Because of the interest shown in this book by Leslie and also my daughter, Laurel, I was encouraged to write these memories.

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Mr. Greg Ellis of the City of Lethbridge Archives reviewed the manuscript and made many valuable suggestions.

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Love Mom

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accustomed to them. We had no transportation--taxi service was for necessities--our cars did not arrive until late April. We had no refrigeration. The weather was a very uncomfortable 40°C.

Hyderabad--it is a typical Indian city. While walking downtown today I nearly stepped on a cow that was leisurely lying on the sidewalk. One comes across animals so suddenly--intermingled with the pedestrians, cars, rickshaws, and bicycles.

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[Hyderabad is the fifth largest city in India. It has a twin city named Secunderabad. The total population is two million people. Hyderabad rests on the bank of the river Musi. Thirteen tall decorative gates serve as exits and entrances into the picturesque old city of Hyderabad. Within this old city there are

monuments such as the Charminar, built in 1591. The Charminar, or the four minarets, is a magnificent square edifice built upon four granite arches facing North, South, East and West. This square edifice is in the heart of the city and is constructed of plaster and stone. The foundation corners lie exactly towards the four cardinal points, each side measuring 60 feet in length and 42 feet in width. There are four splendid arches in the main building, one in each direction, measuring 24 by 40 feet. Facing each are four highways. Several stairs lead to the upper portion which has four minarets 80 feet high, subdivided into 4 stories. Ornate decorations are carved on this beautiful lime and stone building. History is re-enacted in this artistic and unforgettable sight. One of the finest buildings in the city is the High Court, situated on the right bank of the river Musi. It houses the high court of the State. We visit the Mozumjahi market to purchase fruit. Certainly the building that houses the produce is ornate. However, on seeing the swarms of flies that cover the fruit I quickly lost sight of the artistic surroundings, as I prayed for the fortitude to eat this no doubt delicious dessert. The cook soaks the fruit and vegetables in a solution of water and disinfectant. Gradually I will also become accustomed to this. Sometimes there is a decided antiseptic taste to a lot of what I eat!!

What a lovely spot the Public Gardens are! The Legislative Assembly, Children's Library, and the Hyderabad Museum are within the gardens. Sculptured trees abound. The park has a number of small lakes, afloat with exquisite pink lotus. A vast green patch of grass is a children's playground and a cool place for citizens to stroll on in the evening.

The Nehru Zoological Park is one of the finest zoos in India. The animals are not in cages but are featured in their natural habitat. At a distance, as we are guided on paths, there are marvelous views of the likes of kingly lions, sleek leopards, mischievous monkeys, monstrous hippopotamuses and many, many other healthy looking species. The grounds also contain five public gardens.

In Hyderabad there is a famous National Theatre called Ravindra Barathi. Dance programs and dramas are for the most part in the Indian language. (The dramas, because of the language problem, are not suitable for the foreign community). However, I am looking forward to the dance.

The Salarjung Museum, one of the finest in Asia, is well worth many trips to view it. It contains treasures from the world. A very famous fort called Golconda, housed "Kohinoor", the world's most precious diamond. The fort is situated five miles west of Charminar.]

These are only a few of the sights that Hyderabad has to offer. Students of Eastern history, lovers of art, and those who only wish to look at the splendor around them are well rewarded for their efforts.

Love Mom

-xxx-

Hyderabad, India
February 25, 1971

Dear Leslie,

How are you? All is well here-almost anyway. The Girl Guide movement seems to have followed me from Canada.

I was approached by the principal of St. Ann's Girls' School and asked to form a Girl Guide company. It has been a slow process and quite discouraging. Training for the leaders has not been available. Finally, Miss Nicolette Waite, a teacher at St. Ann's, was given a two week training course and so the Guide company took shape. The most difficult aspect was suffering through the intense heat. The meetings could not be changed from 1 o'clock in the afternoon. We were given a small portion of the huge school grounds. The area was completely covered with a thick layer of hot sand. The children seemed to bear this heat quite well. I practically perished.

We honored Lord and Lady Baden Powell on February 22, Thinking Day. Lingum, the cook, made a chocolate cake and I took it to the Girl Guides and Bulbuls (Brownies) at St. Ann's School. We sang and lit candles in honor of the founders of Scouts and Guides. Each girl held a candle and sang Happy Birthday, as she thought of other Guides and Bulbuls throughout the world. Captain Nicolette Waite and four Guides made tea. A helper, Mrs. Leela Subramaniam, also came--attired in a beautiful "Girl Guide blue" sari.

Miss you, Leslie.

Love Mom and Dad

Ritz Hotel
February 2, 1971

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Hyderabad, India
February 18, 1971

Dear Leslie and Laurel,

Greetings from India!

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All seemed well until we took up residence--very large cockroaches appeared--2" long--hordes of them all over the kitchen floor. Tracy could hardly kill them. India's famous "ghekos" (3-6" long salamanders) scurried high up on the walls--I dreaded them and did not ever become

accustomed to them. We had no transportation--taxi service was for necessities--our cars did not arrive until late April. We had no refrigeration. The weather was a very uncomfortable 40°C.

Hyderabad--it is a typical Indian city. While walking downtown today I nearly stepped on a cow that was leisurely lying on the sidewalk. One comes across animals so suddenly--intermingled with the pedestrians, cars, rickshaws, and bicycles.

You would have stared in disbelief as the Pelton's queen sized bed was moved into their house. Six burly fellows carried it on their heads--for 2 miles!!

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Hyderabad, India
April 6, 1971

Dear Leslie and Laurel,

Greetings from India. You two should have been here this morning. Your piano arrived, Laurel, and you will never guess how!! Six men carried it on their heads, a distance of about two miles!

Right now Ashok, the sweeper's baby, is crying. Bala, his six-year-old sister whose job it is to look after him, works hard to pacify him and keep him happy.

And, speaking of Bala--last evening, from upstairs where she couldn't see me, I watched her down below. She was sitting outside the kitchen door watching Ashok as he played and at the same time she was cleaning some rice. In the distance I could hear drums beating and over the valley a procession of people came into view--a funeral was in progress, which would end at nightfall with the burning of the corpse. This is India--a land of unfamiliar and strange happenings!!

Love Mom

-xxx-

Hyderabad, India
May 23, 1971

Dear Leslie,

Greetings from India! How are you? Laurel is enjoying India. It is great to have her here, if only for a while. Soon she will leave for Europe to continue her studies. In the meantime, there are people she will become acquainted with and sights to see.

Tomorrow morning Laurel and I are going to the pearl market. This is situated in the old part of Hyderabad and is a most fascinating spot indeed. When you enter one of the many pearl jewelers' shops, you remove your shoes before you step onto a clean white rug. Seated cross-legged on the floor, dressed in white, are the jewelers, who always greet me in a friendly manner. I am always offered an ice cold bottle of Coca Cola. After seating myself on the floor, I wait with great anticipation until I am brought many bags of pearls--about 1 lb. weight each--all filled with pearls of many sizes and several colors. As I sink my hands into these--my

favorite jewels--I am amazed. Gradually I sort pearls onto a small plate until I find what I wish. They are then weighed, and in a short while the pearls are mine. It is interesting to watch pearls being strung. A young boy of about 12 sits and turns a length of nylon cord around his big toe and while keeping it taut, from his shoulder to his foot, he then proceeds to string pearls onto it until the desired length is reached. Ah, what a delightful way to spend a morning.

Hope all is well, Leslie.

Love Mom

P.S. I must not give the impression that I bought large numbers of pearls. Sometimes there might only be one or two of the desired size and color. It will take many trips to the pearl market to complete a string.

Mom

-xxx-

Hyderabad, India
June 1, 1971

Dear Leslie,

Greetings from India! The weather now is much more bearable. We are already experiencing monsoon rains, and they do cool the place off. The rain is the heavy, pelting type in the morning. By afternoon the sun shines and all is dry again. There is a lot of thunder and lightning with monsoon weather. The lightning is very intense--it lights up this big Indian sky--and I, the eternal coward about electrical storms, quiver and quake!

On Thursday, Laurel and Dad and I are going to Bangalore--it is a one-hour plane ride south. They say it is the prettiest town in India. Bangalore was built by the British and has splendid trees and flower filled gardens. The buildings are picturesque. The greatest attraction is its cleanliness.

Yesterday a young 19-year-old Chinese girl from Calcutta (Rita) and a 26-year-old Indian girl (Nahid) came to lunch and we had a lovely time with them. We exhausted ourselves scrambling over the rocks in the Banjara Hills. They were very anxious to take pictures of this area.

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Charming Indian children attending a wedding on the grounds of the Ritz Hotel, Hyderabad.



"Prospera" our home in Hyderabad.



Wandering Gypsy blacksmiths near Bhopal.



At the arrival of our new car the servants performed a "Puja" ceremony - with their guaranty that all evil spirits would never come near the car!!



Village people grinding grain for the evening meal.



Laurel's piano being moved to our house - on the very strong heads of these coolies.

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Hyderabad, India
January 8, 1972

Hi Les:

Happy New Year!! During the past months we have had our misgivings about the progress and future status of the project--particularly during the fourteen-day war. As you may have noted, there has been considerable furor in India and the United States of America concerning United States' aid to India. Recently, politicians in India have said "no more aid--we will do the work ourselves." However, recent decisions indicate that this will not influence our project. Quite the opposite--although our work is slow, lately there has been a thrust forward towards accomplishment. I am sure Dad and the other members of the Canadian Dryland Team will be happy to see their work finally acquire speed and direction.

Happy New Year, Leslie. I am sure all will go well for you.

Love Mom

-xxx-

Hyderabad, India
January 18, 1972

Dear Leslie:

Greetings from India! Glad to hear that though your holidays were hectic they were fun.

At present, all seems to be settled into a workable routine. However, one never quite knows. There is an uncertain peace on the national scene. Nearer to home--right in our house--there appears to be a question concerning the servants. I ask "do they or don't they work in harmony?" Complaints are numerous. The night watchman (chokidar) accuses the cook of not wanting to give him his morning coffee. The driver, in turn, has very disparaging remarks to make about the cook. If these--my household friends--could forgive and forget, we would live in harmony. They are of Hindu and Muslim faith. Historically these religious groups share a background of unrest. My role as a peacemaker can only be effective if I can surmount this obstacle.

Maybe I will dole out measures of kindness and at least for the moment, blessed peace will reign at our house.

I am going to the MacBeath house. Two of their children, aged twelve and nine years, will leave for boarding school tomorrow. Kodai Kanal (the school's name) is five hundred and fifty air miles from here. The four Stevenson girls--youngest aged six years--also depart for school at this time.

When children are at Kodai Kanal, their families are separated from them. As they are only home for three months of the year, family life is considerably shortened. Kodai Kanal adheres to the American plan of education, which compliments the Canadian school system. Too many differences exist between the Indian and Canadian systems of study. As a bonus Kodai Kanal offers many music programs, outdoor activities, and student oriented social programs.

Hope all is well.

Love Mom

-xxx-

Hyderabad, India
January 30, 1972

Dear Leslie:

Greetings from India! It is lovely here--fifty above at night, eighty-five above in the afternoon. However, the Indian people can hardly wait for this "winter" to end. They feel cold.

Dr. Andrews, Director of the Lethbridge Research Station, will be visiting the Dryland Team and their families. He will arrive next week, along with Bryan Wannop of the Canadian High Commission in New Delhi. Bryan's parents, Ethel and Reg Wannop, will accompany him. We should have fun. A bonus is that we do hear news of Canada--something that we are in short supply of at most times of the year.

Hope you are well.

Love Mom

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while she poured the offending water on my head. Sputtering I said, "Hey, that could ruin my hair-do." Akbar could not understand my concern. Perhaps the "water on the head" procedure was a cooling off process!!

After ten minutes of being par-boiled I had a most welcome shower. The morning ended with a delicious cup of Indian tea.

Ann

-xxx-

New Delhi, India
May 11, 1972

Dear Leslie:

Greetings from New Delhi! We are on the way to the Kashmir. First we will visit Bryan Wannop and his mother and father, Reg and Ethel Wannop. This is always a pleasure--Bryan is a tremendous host. Ethel and Reg have a great capacity for enjoying life.

Ethel and I went to the market this afternoon. She is seventy-four years old. This did not stop her from shopping, covering great distances in the sweltering heat.

That night, Bryan had a farewell party for his parents. About fifty people attended, including Mr. George, the Canadian High Commissioner to India. Bryan placed Persian rugs on the lawn and scattered pillows and chairs on them. Candles glowed in the bright Indian moonlight--a night of fun and merriment.

We miss you.

Love Mom

-xxx-

Srinigar,
Kashmir, India
May 12, 1972

Dear Leslie:

Greetings from the Kashmir! We have arrived in beautiful Srinigar! Mr. Butt's houseboats are the same as those of last year. The weather, however, is cooler. Because of this only lunch is held on the lawn. Tea and dinner are served beside a fireplace.

In the morning we drifted down the river, under the seven bridges. The water was dirty. The houseboats we passed were home to many poor people. Families dwelt in squalor. Many

women were washing their clothes vigorously, as did their predecessors from ancient Biblical times. The method used was a combination of beating and banging. Although this would only clean partially, it was guaranteed to shorten considerably the life of each garment!

On a rainy day we were shown how the world famous Kashmiri carpets are made. It is quite unbelievable to see these artisans sitting on the floor--in the cold--as the leader chants the pattern. His fellow workers weave beautiful and intricate patterns, as their ancestors did centuries before them. After a rug is finished it is immersed in the cold waters of the Jhelum River.

The Kashmir is a shopper's paradise. Marvelous crewel embroidery, along with other decorative kinds of handwork, are offered for sale in the shops. There is unbelievably beautiful leather clothing, wool fabrics made exquisite with hand embroidered designs, unique wood furniture carved by hand, elephants shaped from wood, brass ornaments and jewelry. Ah! I must return again to view these great bazaars and shops--to feast my eyes on the marvels of the Kashmiri landscape and to rub shoulders with these friendly and gentle people.

Last night, along with thirteen other guests, we had dinner with Mr. Butt and his family. It was held in their garden. Our seats were on the floor. Water was poured over our hands from a big pot. We ate rice and curry with our fingers. Water was again poured over our hands. At the end of the meal we were served Kashmiri tea. This lovely evening gave us a privileged glimpse of a very hospitable and very affectionate Muslim family.

This morning, breakfast was held in the garden, under the four hundred year old walnut trees. Brightly colored roses, in profusion, grow with abandon along the walks. Shah Jahan, who built the Taj Mahal and the Shalimar Gardens once said of the Kashmir, "if there is paradise on earth, it is here."

Today is Friday. The Muslims are gathering in crowds at the Mosque. Loud speakers carry their singing far away. A hair of the prophet Mohammed is preserved in a glass vial and guarded in the Mosque. Several times a year people from far and near come to view it. This is accompanied by great emotion on the part of the faithful.

Our return to New Delhi saw an end to the comfortably cool climate of the Kashmir. As we

Ritz Hotel
February 2, 1971

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February 18, 1971

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We are now busy settling into our house. It has been renovated and is really lovely--roses are in bloom in the garden. A large banana tree grows by the kitchen door. Two beautiful teakwood beds are in place. The stove will be installed on Saturday--hopefully. Our sea freight is in but the air freight is in Madras--'fridges are on a boat in the ocean somewhere!! All our summer clothes are in the air freight and the weather is a balmy 80°F above!! We are ordering handmade furniture--readymade is mostly unavailable. Rugs will be interesting to select. The house should be lovely.

All seemed well until we took up residence--very large cockroaches appeared--2" long--hordes of them all over the kitchen floor. Tracy could hardly kill them. India's famous "ghekos" (3-6" long salamanders) scurried high up on the walls--I dreaded them and did not ever become

accustomed to them. We had no transportation--taxi service was for necessities--our cars did not arrive until late April. We had no refrigeration. The weather was a very uncomfortable 40°C.

Hyderabad--it is a typical Indian city. While walking downtown today I nearly stepped on a cow that was leisurely lying on the sidewalk. One comes across animals so suddenly--intermingled with the pedestrians, cars, rickshaws, and bicycles.

You would have stared in disbelief as the Pelton's queen sized bed was moved into their house. Six burly fellows carried it on their heads--for 2 miles!!

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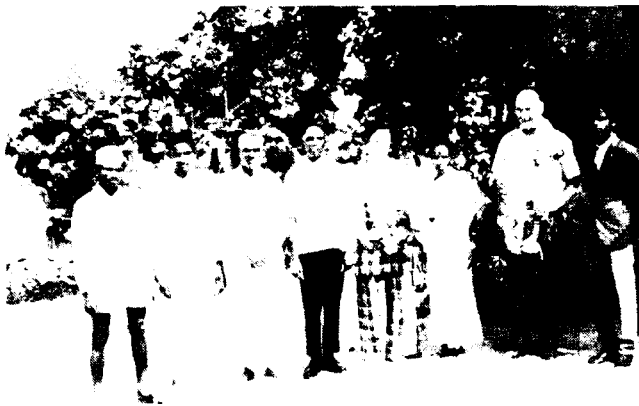
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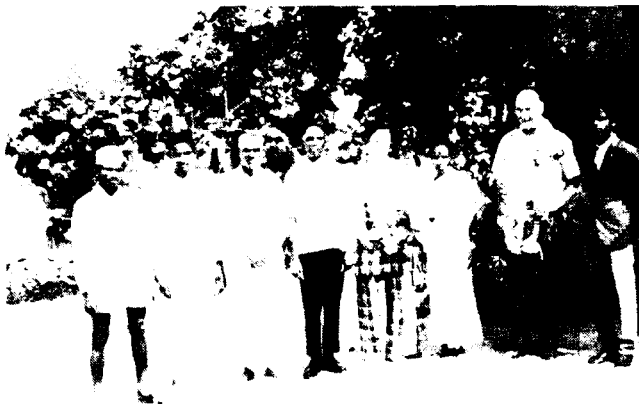
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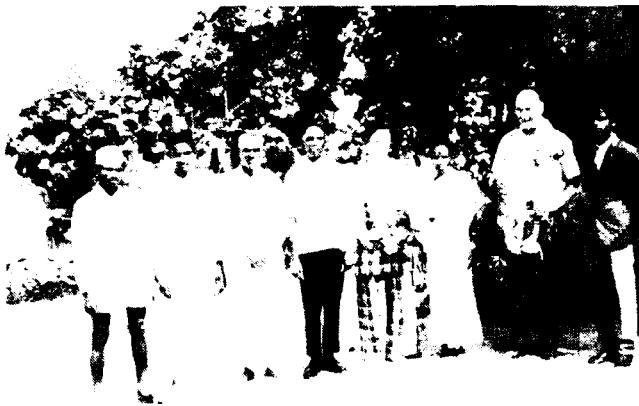
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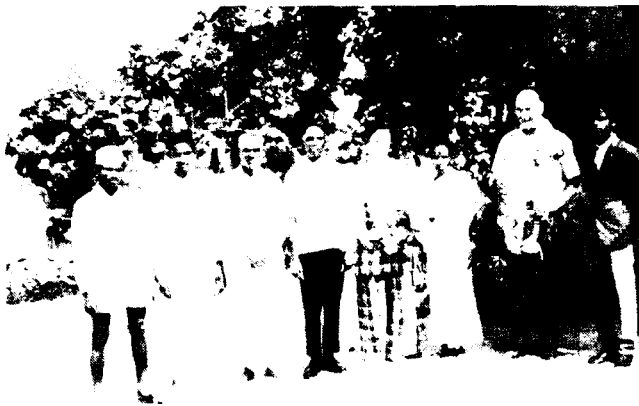
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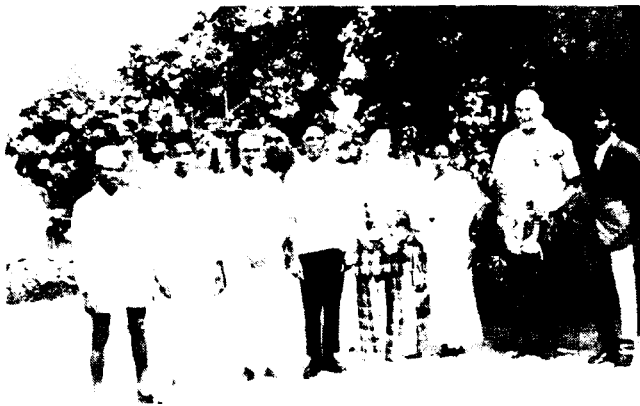
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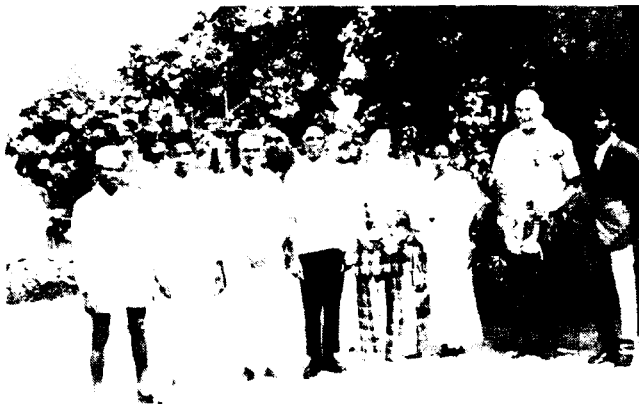
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Dear Leslie:

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We are now busy settling into our house. It has been renovated and is really lovely--roses are in bloom in the garden. A large banana tree grows by the kitchen door. Two beautiful teakwood beds are in place. The stove will be installed on Saturday--hopefully. Our sea freight is in but the air freight is in Madras--'fridges are on a boat in the ocean somewhere!! All our summer clothes are in the air freight and the weather is a balmy 80°F above!! We are ordering handmade furniture--readymade is mostly unavailable. Rugs will be interesting to select. The house should be lovely.

All seemed well until we took up residence--very large cockroaches appeared--2" long--hordes of them all over the kitchen floor. Tracy could hardly kill them. India's famous "ghekos" (3-6" long salamanders) scurried high up on the walls--I dreaded them and did not ever become

accustomed to them. We had no transportation--taxi service was for necessities--our cars did not arrive until late April. We had no refrigeration. The weather was a very uncomfortable 40°C.

Hyderabad--it is a typical Indian city. While walking downtown today I nearly stepped on a cow that was leisurely lying on the sidewalk. One comes across animals so suddenly--intermingled with the pedestrians, cars, rickshaws, and bicycles.

You would have stared in disbelief as the Pelton's queen sized bed was moved into their house. Six burly fellows carried it on their heads--for 2 miles!!

Love Mom

[Among the very difficult things to become accustomed to in India are the beggars on the street; a raggedy, dirty, ailing segment of humanity and ever-present aspect of the Indian society. Shopping thus becomes very difficult. You are more often than not trailed by a motley array of dirty, very ragged, often disease-ridden beggars. Their sole purpose is to extract money from the weary shopper. The adults are a very sorry sight indeed. However, it is the babies and children who live this unfortunate and cruel life that tug at your heart strings. They innocently fall heir to this unbelievably pathetic form of existence. We were told that ignoring the beggars was our only choice. No doubt that was true. Because they were a very visible segment of the society I now lived in, I could not fully adhere to this, no doubt, wise advice. Gradually I became a friend to about six crippled beggars and became a more tolerant person because of this strange alliance. Very obviously some beggars belonged to a syndicate and turned their profits over to a boss. It was impossible to differentiate between the destitute and the professional beggar. I had to grapple with my conscience, so could not completely ignore the miserable lives led by these people of the street. In the winter I gave them warm clothing and blankets. India is trying to abolish beggary--may she succeed in this mammoth endeavor.]

[Hyderabad is the fifth largest city in India. It has a twin city named Secunderabad. The total population is two million people. Hyderabad rests on the bank of the river Musi. Thirteen tall decorative gates serve as exits and entrances into the picturesque old city of Hyderabad. Within this old city there are

dinner party. These functions give the newcomers welcome to a new country and to new friends.

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Forcing people to work to pay off a debt is illegal in India and other countries in southern Asia. But the laws are hard to enforce, especially when local officials are paid to look the other way, the experts said.

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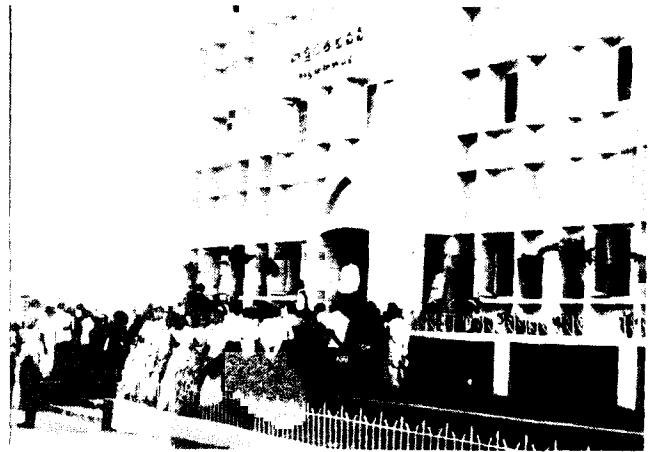
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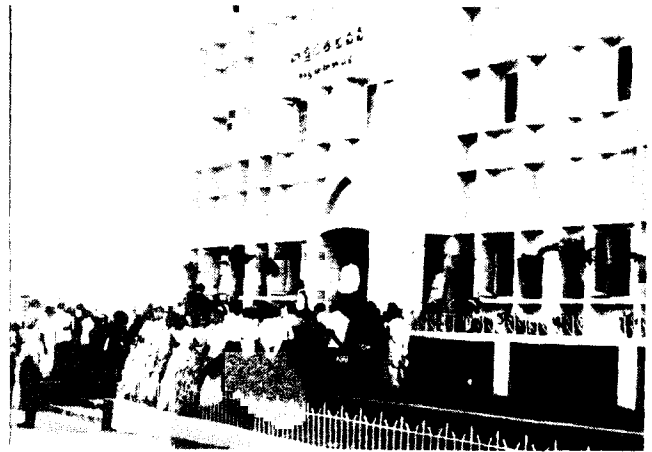
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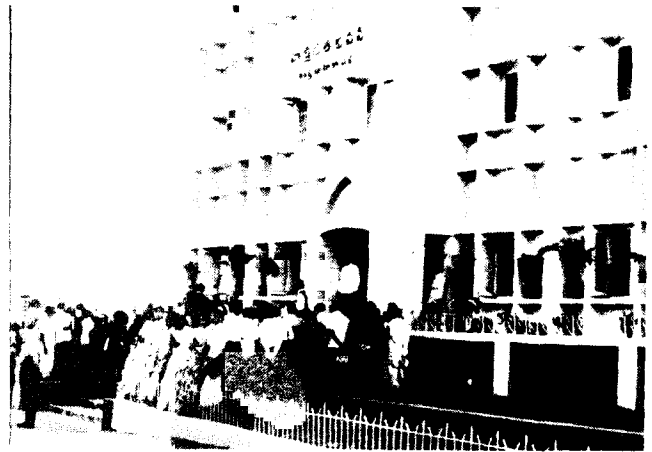
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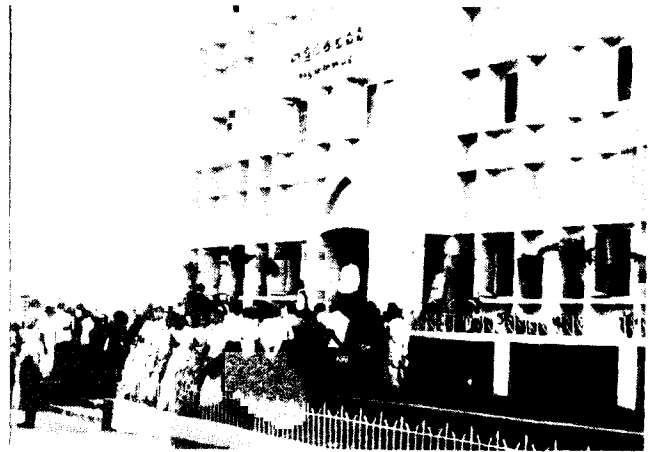
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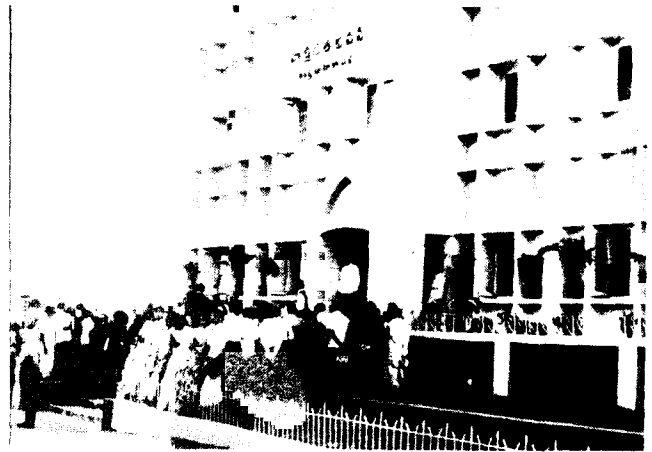
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Most of them are outcasts or untouchables, tribal or religious minorities.

Parents, desperate for cash to feed and clothe their families, borrow money from middlemen or employers and then surrender their children to work for a pittance until the loan is repaid.

Too often, the interest soars upward and the child grows up yoked to the debt, sometimes passing it on to his children.

The cheap labor that developing countries tout to lure foreign investment is often a child's, human rights campaigner Krishna Iyer told the conference.

Forcing people to work to pay off a debt is illegal in India and other countries in southern Asia. But the laws are hard to enforce, especially when local officials are paid to look the other way, the experts said.

The problem is worst in India, where 40 percent of the population of 800 million live below the poverty line.

Children aged six to 12 work 10-hour days for less than a dollar. If they are working in bondage, half or more is deducted--if they are paid at all.

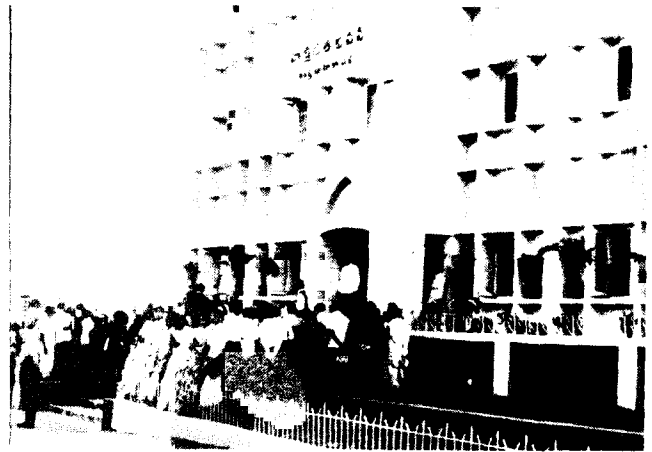
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"The loan keeps getting bigger every day," he said. "If we try to leave, either the police come or they tie us up and beat us with sticks and lock us up for the night."

May those who care about the plight of the children of Asia find the necessary means to liberate these innocent victims.

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The Nickolaichuk family of Swift Current, Saskatchewan, is gradually becoming accustomed to Hyderabad. When we arrived with them from New Delhi last Tuesday, a contingent of six Canadian children, their arms loaded with flower garlands, greeted the three Nickolaichuk youngsters with the traditional Indian welcome. At either the arrival or departure of friends, relatives or business acquaintances, one or many beautiful flower scented long garlands are respectfully placed around the receivers neck--a lovely custom indeed.

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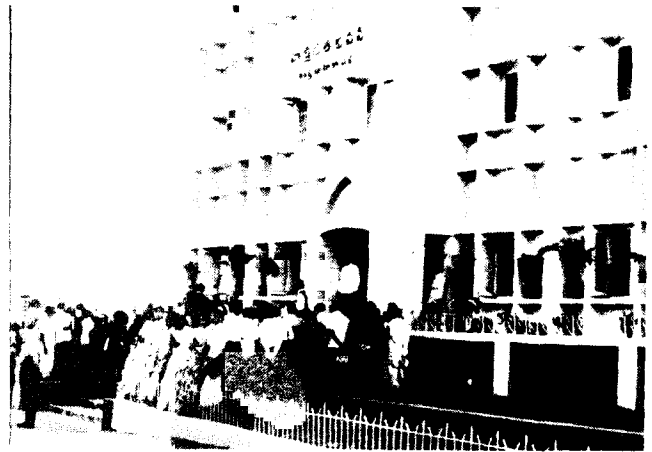
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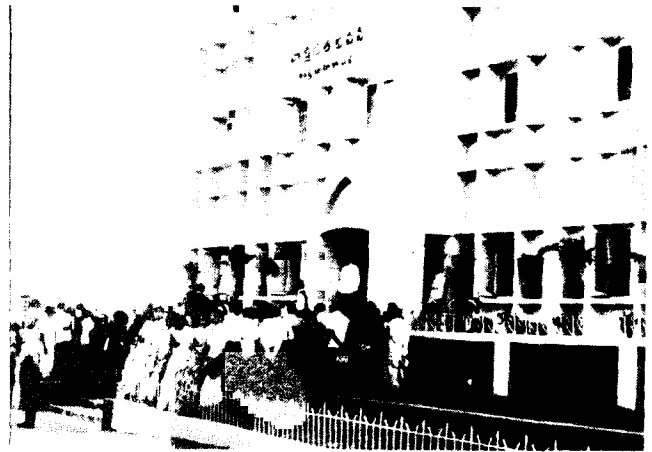
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June 10, 1979

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The weather here continues hot. The temperature the other night reached 107° Fahrenheit. The cooling monsoon rains have not arrived.

My leg has to be in this cast until the middle of July. I am finding that sitting in a chair with my leg elevated is quite boring.

I sat in this position while we had a dinner party the other night. The servants willingly obeyed as I told them what had to be done. The dinner was a farewell to several Canadians from Swift Current, Canada, who were returning home. Twenty-seven people were here. Usually I enjoy the company of friends, but I was quite uncomfortable and was glad when the evening was over.

The flowers are almost nonexistent this year, because of the extreme heat. The trees and bushes, however, miraculously break forth in splendid and colorful flowers and are a joy to behold. I am amazed that there never is any wilting from the heat. These marvels of nature remain fresh and very beautiful as if defying the wickedly high temperatures. All else--man, beast and most vegetation suffer through the months of April, May and June.

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Ritz Hotel
February 2, 1971

Dear Leslie and Laurel,

Finally our curiosity about Hyderabad had become a reality. We stared excitedly from the plane--and--Wow! There it was!! Not as we had been told it would appear, but the way an Indian city of two million people was in 1971.

At that moment, Bill and Doreen Pelton of Swift Current, Saskatchewan and Tracy and myself marked the beginning of an adventure that would completely change our lives. During the next few years we would rub shoulders with the Indian people. Many times their culture became our culture--and thus we gleaned an insight into the mysteries of India and her people.

Love Mom

-xxx-

Hyderabad, India
February 18, 1971

Dear Leslie and Laurel,

Greetings from India!

For the last two weeks, home was the Ritz Hotel--a former palace and quite interesting in its decor. This was Doreen's and my first taste of Indian cuisine. The meals always included dessert--English trifle. All this was proudly served by waiters in colorful Indian uniforms, topped off with not so white gloves!!

We are now busy settling into our house. It has been renovated and is really lovely--roses are in bloom in the garden. A large banana tree grows by the kitchen door. Two beautiful teakwood beds are in place. The stove will be installed on Saturday--hopefully. Our sea freight is in but the air freight is in Madras--'fridges are on a boat in the ocean somewhere!! All our summer clothes are in the air freight and the weather is a balmy 80°F above!! We are ordering handmade furniture--readymade is mostly unavailable. Rugs will be interesting to select. The house should be lovely.

All seemed well until we took up residence--very large cockroaches appeared--2" long--hordes of them all over the kitchen floor. Tracy could hardly kill them. India's famous "ghekos" (3-6" long salamanders) scurried high up on the walls--I dreaded them and did not ever become

accustomed to them. We had no transportation--taxi service was for necessities--our cars did not arrive until late April. We had no refrigeration. The weather was a very uncomfortable 40°C.

Hyderabad--it is a typical Indian city. While walking downtown today I nearly stepped on a cow that was leisurely lying on the sidewalk. One comes across animals so suddenly--intermingled with the pedestrians, cars, rickshaws, and bicycles.

You would have stared in disbelief as the Pelton's queen sized bed was moved into their house. Six burly fellows carried it on their heads--for 2 miles!!

Love Mom

[Among the very difficult things to become accustomed to in India are the beggars on the street; a raggedy, dirty, ailing segment of humanity and ever-present aspect of the Indian society. Shopping thus becomes very difficult. You are more often than not trailed by a motley array of dirty, very ragged, often disease-ridden beggars. Their sole purpose is to extract money from the weary shopper. The adults are a very sorry sight indeed. However, it is the babies and children who live this unfortunate and cruel life that tug at your heart strings. They innocently fall heir to this unbelievably pathetic form of existence. We were told that ignoring the beggars was our only choice. No doubt that was true. Because they were a very visible segment of the society I now lived in, I could not fully adhere to this, no doubt, wise advice. Gradually I became a friend to about six crippled beggars and became a more tolerant person because of this strange alliance. Very obviously some beggars belonged to a syndicate and turned their profits over to a boss. It was impossible to differentiate between the destitute and the professional beggar. I had to grapple with my conscience, so could not completely ignore the miserable lives led by these people of the street. In the winter I gave them warm clothing and blankets. India is trying to abolish beggary--may she succeed in this mammoth endeavor.]

[Hyderabad is the fifth largest city in India. It has a twin city named Secunderabad. The total population is two million people. Hyderabad rests on the bank of the river Musi. Thirteen tall decorative gates serve as exits and entrances into the picturesque old city of Hyderabad. Within this old city there are

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The weather here continues hot. The temperature the other night reached 107° Fahrenheit. The cooling monsoon rains have not arrived.

My leg has to be in this cast until the middle of July. I am finding that sitting in a chair with my leg elevated is quite boring.

I sat in this position while we had a dinner party the other night. The servants willingly obeyed as I told them what had to be done. The dinner was a farewell to several Canadians from Swift Current, Canada, who were returning home. Twenty-seven people were here. Usually I enjoy the company of friends, but I was quite uncomfortable and was glad when the evening was over.

The flowers are almost nonexistent this year, because of the extreme heat. The trees and bushes, however, miraculously break forth in splendid and colorful flowers and are a joy to behold. I am amazed that there never is any wilting from the heat. These marvels of nature remain fresh and very beautiful as if defying the wickedly high temperatures. All else--man, beast and most vegetation suffer through the months of April, May and June.

Are you having any fun?

Love Mom

-xxx-

Hyderabad, India
July 5, 1979

Dear Leslie:

Greetings from India! How are you?

I went to church for the first time since my accident. We have been attending that church for more than three years. No one ever speaks to us, although I always say, "Good morning." I have developed an isolated feeling from being ignored for so long.

There were many children at a dinner party held recently. The Indian children, especially, were simply beautiful.

The Indian people are in a panic about the return to earth of the Sky Lab. Many are fleeing their homes because they fear it will fall over India. Is there much talk of this in Canada?

Again I have a new gardener--he never smiles.

Dad is outside repairing a small patio table. The ants have eaten the wood inside the legs and filled the gaps with dirt. Ants are very ingenious creatures.

Hope all is well, Leslie.

Love Mom and Dad

-xxx-

Hyderabad, India
August 9, 1979

Dear Leslie:

Greetings from India! Are you having fun?

It seems as if one of the fun things to do around here is to join the Indians in the celebration of their festivals. Last Wednesday was Independence Day. Most of Hyderabad was decorated with colored lights. The Legislature and grounds were beautifully illuminated and could be seen for miles.

Someone actually said "hello" to us in church this morning. This is the first time in 3 years. I would surmise that they are not a friendly congregation!

About ten men from Sri Lanka are visiting with the project. They are worried about not having enough time for shopping! Apparently, if they don't arrive back home with new saris and bangles for their wives, the husbands would have to contend with very angry spouses!

I went to a luncheon at St. Ann's convent, where I worked with Girl Guides. Five Italian sisters were celebrating their Golden Anniversary of the profession of their vows. I have never seen so many priests and nuns in one place--all dressed in white. I talked to the sisters--a bit in Italian.

The Muslim Festival of Ramadan is here. It has been preceded by 40 days of prayer and fasting. We visited our Muslim friends.

goods are more readily available. The Batik printing done by the Sri Lanka artists is very beautiful. Another plus factor is the sandy beaches that adorn this picturesque spot.

The children on the street in Sri Lanka ask for things they want: a school pen, candy or money. They are not professional beggars. They just ask for presents, so to speak.

A year and a half ago I paid a tailor to obtain fabric to make into a skirt for me. Certainly I had despaired of ever seeing the tailor or the skirt. Today he reappeared to take my measurements! He told me he would bring the skirt in two days. I would like to be pleasantly surprised, but remind myself of the one year and one half wait.

Hope you are well, Leslie.

Love Mom and Dad

-xxx-

Hyderabad, India
March 10, 1980

Dear Leslie:

Greetings from India! This is the last letter I will write to you from India. We leave for Canada on March 26.

We went to Madras this week for the purpose of selling our car. At 4 a.m. we were on the road and were in Madras at 7 p.m. Two drivers accompanied us. Our trip home the next day was made by plane. It was a real thrill for Das, one of the drivers, as he had not previously been on an aircraft. I hated to leave Madras as it is a beautiful city; it was as if I were parting from a friend.

I have the loan of a car for the next two weeks. It is a quaint 1939 Ford and has a running board.

The farewell dinner parties continue. All our evenings from now until we leave are booked for the sole purpose of dining with friends.

One of the plus factors in living here has been the privilege of making so many new friendships. At our dinner table we have enjoyed the company of interesting people from India and different countries. They came from all walks of life and were always an interesting addition to the community.

To say good-bye to the servants will be sad. By that time they may have found jobs. In this country there are a lot of people looking for work.

No doubt these people, who have served us so well, will have many flower garlands with which to honor us and to say good-bye. Roses and jasmine are the popular components of these beautiful adornments. I will always remember this gracious gesture. The scent of roses and jasmine will forever conjure up a people who for 7 years showed me kindness, hospitality and love. For this I am truly thankful.

See you soon, Leslie.

Love Mom

-xxx-



Rickshaw carrying school children home from class

- REFLECTION -

In India I received a gift from our friends Jean and Doug Stevenson and family. Titled, "The India I Love" text by Marie-Simone Renou.

The story of India is presented in a very interesting manner. The photography by Jean-Louise Nori beautifully illustrates many phases of this unfathomable country. This book will always take me back, in time, to my stay with Mother India.

My memories will be of the great multitudes of people in the cities--and at the time of festivals--in village, town and city. The great numbers of men and women and children must be seen to be believed.

The simple faith of the myriad of people, whose homes are mud huts, makes me feel humble. There is a fatalistic approach to life. However, in spite of their poverty and other hardships that they must endure, I am always amazed at their understanding of the true meaning of life. Not to be forgotten is the wisdom that governs their thinking. These people lead simple but very hard-working lives. At the core of their existence is their reverence for family life, marvelous to observe.

I always will remember the women of India. The laborers, working in the rice fields, wear inexpensive but very colorful saris. Often they place a flower in their shiny black hair. As they bend over to transplant the green rice, these ladies impart a rhythm to their work.

When there is a festival, middle class, upper class and the poor look absolutely resplendent in their saris of gold and silver ornamentation--silks of all vibrant colors. The poor are not to be outdone as they wear their cotton finery of brilliant hues. Above all this is the dignified and stately manner of walking all Indian women display. They truly wear their saris like queens.

The Indian people treasure their children. The education of these girls and boys is of primary importance to their parents. In the morning it is a joyful experience to come upon a rickshaw spilling over with children beautifully groomed, white teeth showing through wide smiles, little girls with shiny black pigtails, little boys with their hair short and tidy, busily talking as they leave for school.

At 4 P.M. of the same day the rickshaws return home from school. The children are now tired, their hair no longer neat, uniforms are wrinkled. They have had a busy day. They pass me by, glancing with their beautiful black eyes. For a brief moment I am a part of their happy lives--then they are gone.

The Taj Mahal mausoleum, mosques and temples will leave a lasting impression. India is world famous for the architectural beauty of these structures. They are mostly very old, very historic, of great religious significance to the people and a constant source of educated interest to the tourist. All the ceremony that accompanies the functions within these unbelievable edifices is a most important part of India.

The trees and flowers are magnificent. I will not forget the bright blue-pink throated morning glories that lazily climb over our house wall in Hyderabad, the brilliant orange of the marigolds that bloom profusely all year and are so much a part of the Hindu religion. The roses that I have seen in India produce blooms that are twice the size of those that bloom in my Lethbridge garden. The Kashmir has pink lotus that cover the complete surface of some lakes. Rare deep blue poppies grow in this enchanted land. Huge, several hundred year old walnut and palm trees reach for the sky.

In Hyderabad the tall Jacaranda tree that produces exquisite blue flowers and the fiery orange blooms of the "Flame of the Forest" are a marvel to observe. They bring forth their masses of blossoms during April and May--the hottest time of the year. The temperature then often reaches 110°F or higher. There is no rain to provide moisture or nary a cool respite for these colorful trees. Somehow--as a wonder of nature--they are bowed down with their spectacular blossoms. Majestically they stand.

Lakshmi and Ramana, have a huge coconut palm tree growing at the front of their home in Hyderabad. It has a perfectly symmetrical shape--with a round trunk that holds the fronds in a semi-circle. It seems to invite us to sit underneath it with our friends - and to converse late into the night. Above glows the Indian moon--bright stars look down and the tree is a part of those magical nights.

Ann

Think of me as your friend, I pray, And call me by a loving name. I will not care what others say If only you remain the same. I will not care how dark the night. I will not care how wild the storm. Your love will fill my heart with light. And shield me close and keep me warm.

William Winter

Front Cover - Lakshmi and Ann as the sun sets over the Indian Ocean.

Rear Cover - Spectacular bougainvillea spilling over the garage at our home in Hyderabad.

This booklet was prepared entirely on the Lethbridge Historical Society computer.
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1971 - 1974

1976 - 1980

by

Ann A. Anderson



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